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PRIORITY THEMES

Algeria, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire*, Cuba, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia and Zambia: draft resolution

Women in agriculture and rural development

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 47/174, Economic and Social Council resolutions 1990/15 and 1992/53, and Commission on the Status of Women resolutions 34/3, 35/7, 36/5 and 37/6,

Recalling also the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ which highlighted the key role of women in the development and production of food and agriculture, and in food security, and which recommended the establishment of multisectoral programmes to promote the productive capacity of poor rural women in food and animal production so as to create off-farm employment opportunities and to reduce their workload,

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* In accordance with rule 69 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 June 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Referring to paragraphs 224-227 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, as well as to chapter 24 of Agenda 21, 2/ adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, underlining the importance of women's role in the management and protection of the environment and in achieving a sustainable and equitable development,

Welcoming the adoption by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 3/ which stressed the importance of the integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process,

Recalling the recommendations of the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development: The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s in 1989 on the need to design specific training programmes for women in the rural areas aimed at developing their technical skills in agriculture and other fields including environment, water and energy, within the global framework of the improvement of women's access to higher education in the field of science and technology,

Welcoming the adoption of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women, 4/ by the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, in Geneva in 1992,

Recalling the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa 5/ on food self-sufficiency and food security for Africa in 1984 and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, 6/

Bearing in mind that rural areas still represent an important part of the African region, where rural populations may account for up to 85 per cent of the total population, that the agricultural sector can contribute up to 50 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and that the proportion of active rural women varies from 45 to 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force, producing up to 80 per cent of food crops,

Expressing deep concern that despite the fact that rural women significantly contribute to the well-being of rural families, to the livelihood of communities and to the national economy, their important role is not

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2/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

3/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24) (Part I), chap. III.

4/ A/47/308-E/1992/97, annex.

5/ A/S-11/14, annex I.

6/ General Assembly resolution S-13/2, annex.

sufficiently recognized, and their participation in the decision-making process at all levels is very reduced,

Aware of the need to recognize the importance of an understanding of gender issues within all areas of agricultural, social, economic, environmental and political life in order to achieve a balanced division of roles and responsibilities and an equitable access to resources and to the benefits of development,

Deeply concerned by the lack of economic independence of rural women owing to their lack of access to land ownership, productive resources, and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and owing as well to inadequate professional and technical skills as a result of the restricted access of women to training and literacy programmes,

Noting that rural areas lack favourable social support services and resources, information on openings and opportunities, and enabling conditions that would allow rural women to fully participate in development,

Aware of the low self-esteem of rural women and their limited self-awareness concerning their possibilities and potentials and of the fact that there is poor communication on openings and opportunities,

Expressing deep concern about the marginalization of rural women, especially young women with small children, about women living in extreme poverty in rural areas and about the sexual harassment experienced by, and the violence perpetrated against, them, including in war-affected areas, as well as about the effect of male migration,

Aware of the need for rural women to become empowered to take an active part in development as well as of their need to have access to education, health and various social and economic support organizations and institutions,

Concerned about the worsening of the socio-economic status of rural women and of their life and working conditions, hindering their full integration in development,

1. Urges Governments to take action in support of rural women's full participation in the economy and in the political system by developing specific plans to meet the above-mentioned needs;

2. Strongly recommends reinforcement of Governments' accountability in setting up monitoring and evaluation measures to appraise progress made;

3. Urges Governments to integrate gender issues into mainstream research and policy initiatives in the field of agriculture and rural development, and to support, as appropriate, women's participation in policy-making and relevant institutions;

4. Calls upon Governments and international organizations, in particular United Nations organizations, to collect and disseminate information on the

situation of rural women, their concerns, and the strategies required for their advancement through the development of appropriate information channels;

5. Urges Governments on the one hand, to enforce existing legislation, in order to allow women to fully enjoy their legal rights and on the other, to promote legislative initiatives that guarantee equity in the wage system and increase the status of women in agriculture, family enterprises, the professions and the informal sector;

6. Also urges Governments to revise national legislation so as to give rural women rights regarding access to land ownership and technology as well as natural and productive resources;

7. Further urges Governments to formulate policies and provide effective support to rural women, with the assistance of international and non-governmental organizations, with respect to their gaining access to income-generating activities, and to ensure the development of economic structures that create new job opportunities, the development of entrepreneurship, the promotion of credit programmes that provide equity financing, so as to facilitate the starting up of small businesses among rural women, and the introduction of more efficient information systems to facilitate economic activities;

8. Calls upon Governments and financial institutions to provide support for the promotion of grass-roots-level credit programmes adapted to the needs and activities of rural women, so as to encourage and facilitate the start-up of small enterprises;

9. Recommends that Governments create and strengthen local advisory training programmes, and extension services, as well as basic and higher education for rural women, so as to increase their awareness about less-traditional careers and business opportunities and to improve their access to them;

10. Calls upon Governments to promote the provision of primary medical care in rural areas, to promote low-cost primary health care, and to develop and promote sensitization campaigns to encourage low-income rural women to utilize primary health-care facilities;

11. Appeals to numerous Governments that did not ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 7/ to do so and to others to effectively enforce it, in particular with respect to the Convention's provisions concerning rape, forced prostitution and trafficking in human beings;

12. Urges Governments to promote an equitable distribution of income and resources for both economically productive and reproductive tasks and activities, and to establish pension and social security schemes for rural people;

7/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

13. Recommends that Governments take into account the concepts of gender, socio-economic gender analysis, population, environment and poverty eradication in all policies and programmes and provide rural women with the necessary incentives, capacities and skills to effectively carry out the management of the natural resources that they depend on, and to secure a healthy environment and shelter;

14. Strongly appeals to all women, in particular rural women, to be aware of and develop their potential and actively engage, individually or in groups, in the fight for the enforcement of their rights, the improvement of their civil, personal and professional status, and the increasing of their representation in sufficient number in all policy-making, decision-making and consultative bodies and functions;

15. Strongly recommends that Governments promote applied technological research, policy and programmes in the fields of time- and energy-consuming domestic tasks, food production, and processing and storage of food, in order to ensure the saving of time for more remunerative and cultural activities and increase the efficiency and income of rural women;

16. Recommends that Governments promote the establishment of any social infrastructure in rural areas that encourages women, including poor women, to develop capacities and skills such as leadership in administrative and financial management for collective and community life, and that supports rural women's organizations and their participation in representative and economic bodies (for example, farmers' organizations, workers' unions, cooperatives and associations);

17. Requests that the Secretary-General and Governments ensure that the issues of rural women and development programmes are an integral part of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade 8/ and of the national strategies for the Decade.

8/ General Assembly resolution 45/199, annex.